PRACTICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Volume 5 March-April Number 2

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# CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF AN INDIGENOUS CHURCH

William A. Smalley

Over the past generation, a large amount of thought concerning the strategy of modern missions has gone into the question of the relation of the new churches (which have resulted from missionary work) to the missionary body and to the society (the non-Christian culture) around them. It is not my purpose here to go into the extensive literature dealing with this subject, but a classic work, often referred to and widely read, is Roland Allen's Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours?[1] The burden of a great deal of this discussion has been the well-taken observation that modern missions have all too often resulted in churches which are tied to the supporting home church in the West, protected by the mother denomination, and unable to stand alone in their society. This is an oversimplification, and it is not my purpose to go into this basic discussion because I am in substantial agreement with a great deal of it. There are some anthropological problems which have not always been faced in such discussions, however, although many writers have at points touched upon them, and Roland Allen, for example, seems well aware of many of them.

## A False Diagnosis

It seems to have become axiomatic in much missionary thinking that a church which is "self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating" is by definition an "indigenous church." It further seems to follow in the thinking of many people that such an indigenous church (and so defined) is the goal of modern missions. There are some very serious reservations which may be made to this point of view, however, and it is a point of view which may be very misleading as it molds policy for the development of a church, if we look at some of its cultural implications.

It seems to me, first of all, that the criteria of "self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating" are not necessarily diagnostic of an indigenous movement. The definition of such a movement has to be sought elsewhere, and although

these three "self" elements may be present in such a movement, they are essentially independent variables. The three "selfs" seem to have become catch phrases which can be stamped without any particular understanding on one church or on another. Yet it is evident on an examination of the facts that they are not necessarily relevant at all.

## Misinterpretation of Self-government

It may be very easy to have a self-governing church which is not indigenous. Many presently self-governing churches are not. All that is necessary to do is to indoctrinate a few leaders in Western patterns of church government, and let them take over. The result will be a church governed in a slavishly foreign manner (although probably modified at points in the direction of local government patterns), but by no stretch of imagination can it be called an indigenous government. This is going on in scores of mission fields today under the misguided assumption that an "indigenous" church is being founded.

It is further possible for a genuinely indigenous Christian movement to be "governed" to a degree by foreigners. Even in the large-scale Christward movements which have taken place in the world, movements which have been so extensive that the foreign body has had more difficulty in controlling them than what it has had in most of its mission work, and where indigenous patterns of governments have much more easily developed (at least on the lower levels of the church)--even there the mission body has often exerted its governing influence upon the upper level of the society, at least, where it was related in any way to the movement. This may have been by the direct action of missionaries, or the action of church leaders who were trained in the foreign patterns of government. Although such government may be unfortunate in many cases, it does not in the least detract from the indigenous nature of such a Christward movement on the part of a group of people.

## Misapplication of Self-support

It is unlikely that there would be any disagreement with the idea that the Jerusalem church in the first century was an

indigenous church. The Jerusalem Christians were so strongly Jewish in their attitudes that they resented the conversion of Gentiles unless they joined the Jewish ritualistic performance of the law. That church, however, in its time of need received gifts from abroad, from Europe, in modern-day terminology, the West. Paul himself carried some of those gifts to Jerusalem. No one would argue that the receiving of such gifts infringed upon the indigenous nature of the Jewish church.

Neither can one argue, I believe, that the receiving of such gifts by the younger churches today will necessarily infringe upon their indigenous character. This is true in spite of the very real dangers which exist in the subsidy of the younger churches by the mission bodies. I was in Indo-China as a missionary during some of the years of civil war. Those were days when the whole country was badly upset, when church congregations could be cut off from the mission without more than a few hours notice as the battle line shifted, when groups which had been under mission subsidy could suddenly lose their mission help and be placed in a fearful economic position. Together with most of my colleagues, I felt the tremendous weakness of a missionary program which was based upon the foreign financing of its national workers. In a time of crisis such as that we worked hard to see to it that the church was placed on a footing of self-support. Self-support is, wherever economically possible, really the soundest method of church economics. It is healthy for the church and for the mission, but there certainly are situations in which it is not possible, or where it is not advisable, where self-support can make church growth nearly impossible, and in such situations its presence does not necessarily imply the lack of an indigenous church. It is an independent variable within the pattern of the mission and church. All depends on how the problems are handled, and how the temptation to control church life through the manipulation of funds is resisted by the mission body. If foreign funds are handled in an indigenous way, they may still have their dangers, but they do not preclude an indigenous church.

Examples of areas in which the younger churches can usually not be expected to be self-supporting are publication,

Bible translation, education, health and medicine, and many other fields entirely outside the range of their economy. These are not indigenous activities, but they are valuable activities for many churches in the modern world. Whether or not such things enter into the life of a church in an "indigenous manner" is entirely dependent upon the way in which the changes take place, not the source of income. If the changes in the younger church society take place as the result of the fulfillment of a strongly felt need, and in a manner planned and executed by them for their own purposes and in their own way, the simple presence of foreign funds in the project does not destroy its indigenous character.

The richness of Western economy makes it possible for many Western church groups not to need to seek for funds elsewhere. However, even in the rich West many groups have to seek for funds from foundations or other institutions. This does not destroy their indigenous character in the least; it is simply a part of the Western economic scene. Such economic possibilities are usually not open to the younger churches except as they seek their help from the mission body. It is the way the funds are administered, the way the decisions are made, and the purposes to which they are put that are diagnostic of an indigenous church, not the presence or absence of such foreign funds. It would be hard to think of any more fiercely or self-consciously independent country than India today, yet it receives large sums from abroad to bolster its economy and to do things which badly need to be done for its people. On the other hand, it would be very easy to find many examples of self-supporting churches in which the basic indigenous character is not present. There is, for example, a church which is advertised by its founding mission as a great indigenous church, where its pastors are completely supported by the local church members, yet the mission behind the scenes pulls the strings and the church does its bidding like the puppets of the "independent" iron curtain countries. This colonial manipulation may even be quite unconscious on the part of the missionaries. If the church makes its own decisions, without outside interference, as to how its funds shall be used, and does so on the basis of economic patterns natural to it in its own cultural setting, this church may be considered indigenous, even if funds are provided by an outside source.

## Misunderstanding of Self-propagation

Of the three "selfs," it seems to me that that of self-propagating is the most nearly diagnostic of an indigenous church, but here again the correlation is by no means complete. In a few areas of the world it may be precisely the foreignness of the church which is the source of attraction to unbelievers. There are parts of the world where aspirations of people lead them toward wanting to identify themselves with the strong and powerful West, and where the church provides such an avenue of identification.[2] Self-propagation in such a case may be nothing more than a road to a nonindigenous relationship.

I very strongly suspect that the three "selfs" are really projections of our American value systems into the idealization of the church, that they are in their very nature Western concepts based upon Western ideas of individualism and power. By forcing them on other people we may at times have been making it impossible for a truly indigenous pattern to develop. We have been Westernizing with all our talk about indigenizing.

## The Nature of an Indigenous Church

What, then, is an indigenous church? It is a group of believers who live out their life, including their socialized Christian activity, in the patterns of the local society, and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. There are several basic elements in this tentative formulation. For one thing, the church is a society. As society it has its patterns of interaction among people. If it is an indigenous society, an indigenous church, those patterns of reaction will be based upon such patterns existing in the local society. This is true simply because people learn to react with each other in their normal process of enculturation, of growing up, and those normal habits are carried over into church structure. If other patterns are forced upon a church by missionaries, consciously or unconsciously, such a church will not be an indigenous one.

The presence of the Holy Spirit, however, is another basic factor in the indigenous church, and the presence of the Holy Spirit implies transformation both of individual lives and of society. But, as I have tried to point out in an earlier article on the nature of culture change,[3] such transformation occurs differently in different societies, depending on the meaning which people attach to their behavior and the needs which they feel in their lives. Missionaries generally approve of and strive for culture change which makes people more like themselves in form (and this is true although they may overlook the meaning of this form). An indigenous church is precisely one in which the changes which take place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit meet the needs and fulfill the meanings of that society and not of any outside group.

Many have said things like this, and such a statement should and could be elaborated considerably to provide a more adequate description of the nature of an indigenous church. Sometimes in our search for an understanding of the nature of the church we turn to the New Testament (as we rightly should) and seek for it there. But it is not in the formal structure and operation of the churches in the New Testament that we find our answer. As a matter of fact, the church of Jerusalem was apparently different even in operational matters from the churches in Europe, and it was certainly different in the outlook on the basic cultural issues which were so important to the Jews. In the New Testament we do find the picture of the indigenous church. It is that of a church in which the Holy Spirit has worked its transformation within the society. And where that society differs from another (as the Greek world is different from the Jewish world) the church resulting is different.

## Missionaries Do Not Like It

But having said this much, we would now like to stress some of the implications of an "indigenous church," implications which have often not been realized. One is that missionaries often do not like the product. Often a truly indigenous church is a source of concern and embarrassment to the mission bodies in the area.

An example of this which every reader of Practical Anthropology should study is that of the Toba Indians as reported by Dr. William D. Reyburn.[4] The mission was disturbed and unhappy about the indigenous church which spread so rapidly among the Toba People because it assumed a form so different from that of the mission group. It was not until they saw something of the nature of the Church in the sense in which we are discussing it here, and of the working of the Holy Spirit in other societies than their own, that the missionaries not only became reconciled to its existence, but sought to harmonize their program with it to work with it, to the strengthening of that church and to the greater glory of God.

There have been indigenous movements which missionaries have approved of. This approval was sometimes due to the unusual insight and perception of the missionaries who saw beyond the limitations of their own cultural forms and recognized the movement of the Holy Spirit among other people. At other times the general value systems of the new church group so nearly coincided with our own that the result was a church which reflected many of the things that we hold very valuable. Movements in China such as the Jesus Family[5] displayed outstanding personal qualities of frugality, cleanliness, thrift, and other virtues which rate so highly in our own society, and which were considered to be the fruits of the Christian movement. These are, however, ideals present in non-Christian Chinese life. A transformed life in such a case resulted in the perfection of such value systems already in existence in the culture. But that was not the case among the Tobas, where the giving away of possessions, the sharing with one's relatives and neighbors, and the joining in of emotional expressions of religion, characterized the group because it was in these ways that their values were expressed.

As Dr. William D. Reyburn put it some time ago, however, most of us want to join in the jury as God is making his judgments upon people and cultures, yet we don't even understand the meaning of the trial. We are quick to make our evaluations and quick to decide what course the new church should follow, or what course a new Christian individual should take, but we simply are neither competent nor qualified to make such

decisions, having little or no real knowledge of the cultural background of the people or individual.

It is our work first of all to see the Bible in its cultural prospective, to see God dealing with men through different cultural situations. It is our responsibility to see Him change in His dealings with men as the cultural history of the Jews changes, to recognize that God has always, everywhere, dealt with men in terms of their culture. It is next our responsibility to take new Christians to the Bible and to help them see in the Bible God interacting with other people, people whose emotions and problems were very similar to their own so far as their fundamental nature is concerned, but also at times very different from their own in the specific objective or working of their forms of life. It is our responsibility to lead them in prayer to find what God would have them do as they study His Word and seek the interpretation and leadership of the Holy Spirit.

It is the missionary's task, if he believes in "the indigenous principle," to preach that supercultural message: God is in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto Himself. That message is supercultural.[6] It applies to all cultures and all places. The faith it engenders is supercultural, but the medium of its communication and the outworking of its faith in individual lives is not supercultural. It is bound in with the habits and values of every people. It is to deliver that message, the message that turned the world upside down and continues to do so, that the missionary is called.

It is, furthermore, the missionary's responsibility to be a source of cultural alternatives for people to select if they want and need them. The missionary, with his knowledge of history, his understanding of the Scriptures, his knowledge of the church in his own land and in other missionary areas, can often suggest to local groups that there are ways out of their dilemma, that there are ways of a better life in Christ than what they are now living. This is certainly a legitimate function of the missionary and this is his role in culture change. But if genuine change is to take place, the decision, the selection, has to be made by the people themselves, and if the

church is to be an indigenous one, we can know that the selection will be made in the light of the needs and problems, the values and outlooks that people have.

It is the church which will have to decide whether boiling water, abstinence from alcohol, the wearing of clothes, and monogamy are the proper expressions of a Christian in that society. It is the church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit which will have to determine the best way of fostering its own growth and of spreading its witness, and of supporting its formal leadership (if it should have any formal leadership at all).

As we have suggested before, the problem of the implications of the indigenous church are as old as the Judaizers of Jerusalem. Those Judaizers saw Greek Christianity through Hebrew eyes. They are like many missionaries in that, if they were content that any Gentile should be converted at all, they saw conversion in the light of filling of a formal mold.

The New Testament, however, clearly repudiated that view and sets up the church as a group of believers within its own society, working a chemical change within the society like salt in a dish, rather than cutting the society to pieces as the Judaizers would. This is not to gainsay the exclusiveness of Christianity. The church is a separate group, but it is separate in spiritual kind, in relationship to God. It is in the indigenous church that the relationship between the Holy Spirit and society comes into being. This is the New Testament church.

The converts of an indigenous movement are not necessarily cleaner than their neighbors, not necessarily more healthy, not necessarily better educated. It is, furthermore, often the moment at which they become cleaner, more healthy, more educated that that barrier begins to grow which makes their indigenous interaction with their neighbors less likely and the growth of the movement begins to taper off. As Dr. McGavaran has pointed out in his tremendously significant book The Bridges of God,[7] missions have traditionally poured their funds not into the people's movements, but into the station

churches, into the huge mission compounds, into the churches which are their satellites, rather than into the grass-roots growing development of an embarrassing indigenous church.

Not only do many missionaries not like some of the outstanding examples of indigenous church movements, but to an even greater degree their supporting home constituencies are likely not to approve of them. Our cultural values as applied to our churches are so strong that we feel that a corporate structure, a profit motive, individualism and thrift are ipso facto the expressions of Christianity. For God to work His will in any other forms than our own seems inconceivable to most of us.

An implication of the indigenous church which I think is very unwelcome to many missionaries is that the missionary can make no cultural decisions for the Christians. By this I do not mean that the missionary does not make value judgments. As an individual he cannot help doing so, nor should he wish not to do so.[8] His value judgments, if they are to be worth while, have to be cross-culturally oriented, but they will be there. By this I also do not mean that the missionary cannot exercise an important measure of guidance, of suggestion, on the younger church as he fulfills his functions of teaching and preaching and, in many respects, advising.

## An Indigenous Church Cannot be "Founded"

The next implication which has often not fully penetrated into the thinking of missionaries who discuss indigenous movements is that it is impossible to "found" an indigenous church. The Biblical figure of planting and harvest is far more realistic than our American figure based on our American values and expressed in the idea of the "establishment" or "founding" of a church. At one time I had the opportunity to observe the effort of a group of missionaries as they very sincerely were concerned about the "founding" of an indigenous church where up to that time they recognized that the believers were heavily dependent upon the mission for their sustenance. The procedure followed by the mission was to establish a constitutional committee which contained three tribesmen and

two missionaries. The mission considered that they were extremely generous in their outlook by putting more tribesmen than missionaries on the committee.

When the committee met, the missionaries asked the tribesmen what they wanted in their constitution. The tribesmen, of course, did not know what they wanted in their constitution. They had not even known that they wanted a constitution until they had been told so. The missionaries suggested some of the possibilities for a constitution and the tribesmen readily agreed to most or all of them. The result, worked out in good faith by both the missionaries and the tribesmen, was a replica of the denominational constitution of the mission body. To this day no one seems to have sensed the fact that a tribal church with a constitution is no more an indigenous church than a tribal church without one, as the existence of a constitution is entirely irrelevant to the relation of the church to God and to surrounding human life.

In any honestly indigenous work a true constitution (if there were any at all) would be one which would describe the structure of the church society in its workings. This does not mean that those culture changes which are needed to move toward a greater church action than is possible in the original local pattern should not take place. A constitution, if it is truly the expression of forward-looking church leaders, may guide the group in that direction, but it will only do so if it is an expression of such internally felt needs or vision.

Some missions have legislated the gradual withdrawal of financial subsidy from younger churches. This is done in order to put the younger church on its "self-supporting" feet. It is a step toward the day when the church will be indigenous, as the mission sees it, but the withdrawal of subsidy by the mission is a foreign act and not in the most remote sense indigenous.

No, indigenous churches cannot be founded. They can only be planted, and the mission is usually surprised at which seeds grow. Often they have the tendency to consider the seeds which do grow in any proliferation to be weeds, a

nuisance, a hindrance in their carefully cultivated foreign mission garden, and all the time the carefully cultivated hothouse plants of the mission "founded" church are unable to spread roots and to derive their nurture either from the soil of their own life or from the Word of God in the root-confining pots of the mission organization and culture.

## Indigenous Churches Start Apart from Missions

Another implication of the whole idea of an indigenous church is that the great indigenous movements are often not the result of foreign work in any direct way. Sometimes they are the result of the witness of someone who was converted by the efforts of foreign missionaries, but usually it is not the foreign missionary himself whose witness brings about the establishment or beginning of an indigenous movement. Saint Paul was not a foreigner to the Greek world. He was a bi-cultural individual, one who was as much at home in the Greek world as he was in the Hebrew world and whose preaching carried to the Greek world the message which came to him from the Christians of the Hebrew world.

Prophet Harris, who wandered along the west coast of Africa preaching about the men who would come with a Book, was not a foreign missionary. The men from whom the Tobas heard the Gospel as it came to them in its pentecostal form were not foreigners. True, they were not Tobas, but they were the poorer-class Latin-Americans and mixed Spanish-Indian inhabitants of the areas where the Tobas lived. They were very much a part of the cultural picture in which the Tobas found themselves; they were not foreign missionaries. The people's movements in China were usually the result of the energetic faithful work of a Chinese Christian, not the result of foreign missionary evangelism except as he may have been a convert of missionaries.

The Meo movement described by G. Linwood Barney[9] was not brought about through the preaching of a missionary, but through the cooperative work of a Meo shaman who had been converted (under a missionary) and who took another tribesman of the area with whom the Meo were very familiar from village to

village, preaching from town to town. Our distance from most other culture is so great, the cultural specialization of the West is so extreme, that there are almost no avenues of approach whereby the work which we do can normally result in anything of an indigenous nature. It is an ironical thing that the West, which is most concerned with the spread of Christianity in the world today, and which is financially best able to undertake the task of world-wide evangelism, is culturally the least suited for its task because of the way in which it has specialized itself to a point where it is very difficult for it to have an adequate understanding of other peoples.

The New Testament Indigenous Churches

Of many quotations which could have been taken from Roland Allen, the following has been selected to conclude this article. The significant thing, as Allen points out, is that the Apostle Paul did not approve of much of the behavior of either of these churches, but neither did he legislate to either one. He did not even stay around and spoon-feed them. He wrote to Corinth, persuaded, entreated, advised, addressing them always as the "church of God."

> The Church began in Jerusalem as a body of Jews who carefully maintained their Jewish tradition and observed the custom of their fathers. The Church in the Four Provinces consisted almost entirely of Gentiles ignorant of that tradition. Consequently, if a Christian from Macedonia or Achaia went up to Judea he must have found himself in a strange atmosphere, in a community as unlike that to which he was accustomed as it is possible to imagine. Circumcision was practiced, Sabbaths were kept, meats avoided as unclean, the Law was the practical rule of every-day life. There was a strictness and a reserve which must have oppressed and dismayed him. Christianity in Jerusalem must have seemed to him a thing of rules hardly distinguishable from pure Judaism. Many of the Christians shrank from a Gentile, or tolerated him only as a sort of proselyte. In the meetings of the Church the prayers were modelled on Jewish patterns and expressed Jewish thought in Jewish

> speech with which he was not familiar. The only point of real contact was a common devotion to the Person of Jesus, a common recognition of the same Apostles, and a common observance of the same rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
>
> On the other hand, when a Christian from Jerusalem went down to Corinth the shock must have been even more severe. The Corinthian in Jerusalem found himself in a society stiff, uncouth, severe, formal, pedantic. The Jewish Christian in Corinth must have thought the Church there given over to unbridled license. Uncircumcised Christians attended the feasts of their pagan friends in heathen temples. Every letter of the ceremonial law was apparently broken every day without rebuke. Even in the meetings of the Church, preachings and prayers were built on a strange system of thought which could hardly be called Christian, and there was a most undignified freedom of conduct. He must have welcomed the presence in the Church of a party led by men from his own city who argued that in dealing with a people like this it was useless to compromise matters: the only possible course was to enforce the observance of the whole Law throughout the whole Church. To omit anything would simply be to admit the thin end of a wedge which would split Christian morals into fragments. If a man wanted to be saved he must keep the law.[10]

Denominationalism is in many cases a result of the development of more-or-less indigenous churches in various subgroups or social levels of Western society. Usually they start in the lower brackets, fossilizing in their cultural forms as they move up in society and on through time. Until we are willing for the Church to have its different manifestations in different cultures as between the Jewish Christians and the various kinds of Greeks, rather than export the denominational patterns rooted in our history and often irrelevant to the rest of the world, we will not have indigenous churches, whether they are "self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating" or not. It is not until we are willing to let churches grow also that we have learned to trust the Holy Spirit with society. We are treating Him as a small child with

a new toy too complicated and dangerous for Him to handle. Our paternalism is not only a paternalism toward other peoples. It is also a paternalism towards God.

Footnotes

1. Allen, Roland: Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours? Moody Press, Chicago, (reprinted 1956), and World Dominion Press, London, 1912.
2. Reyburn, William D.: "Conflicts and Contradictions in African Christianity," Practical Anthropology, Vol. 4, No. 5 (1957), p. 168.
3. Smalley, William A.: "The Missionary and Culture Change," Practical Anthropology, Vol. 4, No. 5 (1957), pp. 231-237.
4. Reyburn, William D.: The Toba Indians of the Argentine Chaco. The Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, Elkhart, Ind., 1954. Available from Practical Anthropology for $.85.
5. Rees, D. Vaughan: The "Jesus Family" in Communist China. Moody Press, Chicago, 1956.
6. Smalley, William A.: "Culture and Superculture," Practical Anthropology, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1955), pp. 58-71; Smalley, William A., and Fetzer, Marie: "A Christian View of Anthropology," Modern Science and Christian Faith. Van Kampen Press, Wheaton, Ill., 1950.
7. Obtainable from Practical Anthropology for $1.50.
8. Reyburn, William D.: "The Missionary and the Evaluation of Culture," Practical Anthropology, Vol. 4, No. 5 (1957), pp. 238-244.
9. "The Meo--An Incipient Church," Practical Anthropology, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1957), pp. 31-50.
10. op. cit., pp. 166-67.

# GREAT PAN IS NOT DEAD[1]

Max Warren

Round the shores of the Mediterranean at the beginning of the Christian era there was a widespread cult of the rustic god Pan. God of shepherds and flocks and forests, he was a symbol of the deep-rooted paganism which deified the mysterious forces of nature, not least in their unaccountable manifestations. The fear created by his unexpected and startling appearance has given to the English language our word "panic."

Plutarch records the story of how, during the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, the pilot of a ship sailing close to the shore of the island of Paxi heard a strange wailing cry which declared, "Pan is dead--Great Pan is dead." The story reached the Imperial Court and the Emperor ordered an inquiry, but the astrologers were unable to explain the meaning of the cry. Christians later took the story and associated it with the crucifixion of our Lord, claiming that His victory there did to death the old paganism and its fears.

Readers will remember Elizabeth Barrett Browning's long poem "The Dead Pan," written in protest against a romantic classicism which sought to idealize the gods of the ancient world. There she makes use of the legend:

> "By the love He stood alone in
> His sole Godhead rose complete,
> And the false gods fell down moaning,
> Each from off his golden seat;
> All the false gods with a cry
> Rendered up their deity--
> Pan, Pan was dead."

No one of us, as Christians, will want to quarrel with the claim that the Cross saw a decisive victory over the forces of evil, that Calvary was the place of a mighty deliverance for all those whose lives were under bondage to fear. In that victory we Christians live, and the proclamation of that victory by word and by life is the mission of the Christian Church.

But the task committed to us is unfinished. Sentence of death has been passed on Pan, but it is poetic license to pretend that Pan is dead. Wherever panic fear holds men and women in thrall, whether in the West, or the East, or Africa, there Pan is allowed his spurious reign, and the fearful bear witness that Pan, for them, is not yet dead. It was Montaigne who said long ago: "Men are tormented by the ideas they have concerning things, and not by the things themselves."

We have to deal with the living ideas in the minds of men, the ideas which hold their imagination and determine their actions. Pan, the unaccountable, the spirit of paganism, challenges faith in Christ wherever His love has not yet been allowed to cast out fear. Pan is not dead. There is a considerable volume of evidence that he is reasserting his empire.

## The Pipes of Pan in Africa

A preliminary word about paganism in Africa is called for. Paganism is a complex phenomenon. In Africa it includes a belief in a High God, in the reality of things unseen, in an intimate relationship between the spirits of the living and the dead, convictions which are of profound value, convictions which, being baptized into Christ where love casts out fear, offer a wonderful basis for a right approach to this world and the world to come. Do not let anyone underestimate what Africa has to offer to the spiritual sensitivity of mankind, to that in man which can respond to the grace of God shown forth in Jesus Christ. That "urgent pressure upon life" which is God seeking man was being felt by Africans long before the first herald of the Gospel arrived.

There is no space here to develop these points and to describe how they can coexist with the dark things in the African's religious consciousness. William James, in The Will to Believe, speaks of that "dumb region of the heart in which we dwell alone with our willingnesses and unwillingnesses, our faiths and our fears." Each one of us knows the threat of Pan. He who knows the victory of Christ over Pan wants to share in the joy of that victory with every man and woman, including every man and woman of Africa.

With love, not sentimentality, in our hearts and a resolute will to understand controlling our minds, let us try to consider four of the factors which in Africa today favor paganism and make for the extension of the empire of Pan.

## The Impact of Boredom

I begin with a rather startling question. Have we of the West fully allowed for the effect of boredom on the African, the boredom of having to do things in a Western and un-African way both in church and state? Already there is a reaction manifest in many parts of Africa, and the assumed superiority of the European way of doing things is being challenged. In West Africa one symbol of this is seen in the revival of African dress and the return to African names. In religion there is the steady growth of the "sects" at the expense not of the people of Pan, but of other companies of the people of Christ. In politics Uganda is worth watching quite as much as Ghana. Elspeth Huxley, in her book Four Guineas, hazarded this blistering comment on West Africa as she found it:

> How dull life has become, how monotonous, how anemic, how inert! Impatience with British rule is due, I am sure, as much to this as to anything. It is called a revolt against imperialism, but in truth I think it is, in part at least, a revolt against ennui, and that when the British Empire finally crumbles we might write as its epitaph: "We bored them to death."

Naughty? Perhaps a little naughty! But there is enough truth in it to explain a certain underlying nostalgia in Africa for the uninhibited days of Pan.

In the Hibbert Journal for October 1956 there is an account of "An Independent African Church in Sierra Leone." Here is a description of the collection at a special service:

> The Prophet came down from the chancel waving his wand and shouted "Halleloo" to the congregation who chorused back "Halleloo." A brass plate for the offertory was placed on a chair and the Prophet called upon different groups among

> the congregation: a member of each group would strike up a short song or hymn of about two lines, the rhythm of which would be taken up by the drums; pewfuls of women would rise and dance chanting down the aisle to drop their pennies in the plate, meanwhile the Prophet and his acolytes twirled round and round and danced in their white robes. All sorts of groups were called upon, sections of the Ladies' Praying Union, the Kru Circle, "Mr. So and So, family and well-wishers," so that some people came up as many as twelve times, perhaps taking twopence from the plate and dropping a three-penny bit so that they could dance up twice again. Taking the collection in this way occupied one hour five minutes, but was greatly enjoyed.

The contrast between that African service and the conduct of worship according to the Anglican Prayer Book of 1662 or 1549 is at least sufficient to give us pause. Is one of the reasons why the churches in many parts of East Africa are practically deserted on Sundays during the school holidays, when the children are not present, possibly the boredom induced by Western forms of worship? I ask the question because it ought to be asked a good deal more often and more seriously than is commonly the case. There are a sufficient number of exceptions that could be advanced to make it clear that the answer is not necessarily an easy one. But, in seeking the answer, let us remember that in Africa, otherwise than in the "sects," European influence is still dominant.

We must not underestimate the factor of boredom in trying to understand the truth about what is happening in Africa today. As Stuart Cloete remarks:

> This is the new sickness of the African. Boredom of the most intolerable kind. Playing at politics is one outlet, but how long will it suffice? And to what will it lead?

## The Challenge of Modernity

The second factor which I would suggest needs to be considered in understanding Africa today is "modernity," the impact on the life of the African of a new world of values which

completely disrupts the world of values with which he is traditionally familiar, and is doing so without providing any pause for readjustment. Here is the place in Africa today where there are "tears at the heart of things." For, confronted with the deluge of new ideas, new values, new problems, the Old Africa is defenseless and yet, for most Africans, that is the only Africa they know. The African, by nature, is a member of a close-knit community, and the world of the spirit interpenetrates the material world at every point. The pressures of modernity disrupt his community, smash its cohesion and leave the African defenseless before problems, to meet which he possesses no experience. A man-in-community, he finds himself forced to live as an isolated individual. Instead of having his decisions made for him by the custom of the tribe, he has to make up his mind on countless matters about which his tribe had no custom. Can we be surprised if the sequel is disillusionment with the white man's ways, and hatred, bitter hatred, masking fear? Is it surprising that fear often sends Africans back to the worship of Pan? However "unaccountable" Pan might be, his worship fitted into the simple logic of the old way of life. Not every African today is presented with a Christ he can understand. For far too many the Christ to whom he is presented is a Christ who apparently cannot understand him. Do not let us hide behind the glorious exceptions that all of us can quote. The fact that they are exceptions is not the least part of the challenge of the unfinished task of the Christian Church in Africa today.

## The Significance of Polygamy

A third factor which we have to bear in mind in seeking to pursue the truth in Africa is polygamy. This is an enormous subject, far too large and complicated to receive adequate attention here. I want simply to make one suggestion of how the fact of polygamy links up with the other factors being mentioned, and adds its contribution to the confusion in the African scene. I would refer you to a book by Max Gluckman, Professor of Social Anthropology in the Victoria University of Manchester. In Customs and Cultures in Africa he is describing those elements in African life which involve the paradox that while they make for conflict in the smaller units of

society, they also help towards the cohesion of society as a whole. One such element is the polygamous family. The author is concerned solely with the place of polygamy in African life and not with its ethics. In his argument he would have us picture the large family group--the father, his various wives, the children of each wife, and reaching out beyond them all the ramifications of many kin. In practice, African custom has built up a system of taboos which effectively prevent this polygamous family from becoming a world on its own. Instead, the taboos force its members to find their support in many eventualities in the wider kinship group. In this way society as a whole is united at the expense of the family. This pattern is so unfamiliar to the Western mind as to call for understanding, not least for its wider implications, amongst which is the fact that polygamy remains so persistent a tendency in Africa. To some extent it is a self-protective mechanism operating to avert the incalculable perils of social disintegration.

The polygamous family, with its multiplication of kinship groups, plays a social, political, and economic role in African society which must not be underestimated. We may well judge that it is inconsistent with the Western pattern of life which is being forced upon Africa. We may endorse the opinion that the "smaller" Western family of father, mother, and children, represents the ideal nucleus of the wider society of mankind. We may be right in believing that only that smaller family does justice to half the human race, and makes the fullest meaning of partnership possible for man and woman. We shall, as Christians, see all these judgments in the light of the New Testament value set upon personality. Polygamy cannot be brought into any consistency with the values of man and woman as revealed by Jesus Christ our Lord. All that is legitimate Christian reasoning. Only, in reaching these conclusions, let us face the fact that in Africa we are dealing with a polygamous society in a state of violent transition.

The alternative to polygamy, with all its strict sanctions of taboo, in the framework of an ordered way of life is, for all too many, the sordid pursuit of promiscuous relationships with a mounting toll of illegitimacy and social delinquency.

To those who look at Africa without blinkers the picture is a shattering one. Christ loves these African men and women, every one of them. He cares about the disintegrated patterns of their social life, the breakup of all their traditional loyalties. He suffers with them if what the New Testament says is true. A Church which is not a fellowship so strong that it can hold men and women, and their family life, in its continually strengthening and forgiving embrace, and serve as a mutual benefit society in times of stress--as did the old polygamous family--such a Church is a very sad betrayal of its Lord. In the context of that betrayal, wherever it occurs, a legalistic insistence on monogamy and the penalty of excommunication for any lapse, comes very near to the repudiation of a trust.

What is called for, let us face it frankly, is a real revival in the Church of the kind that affects family relationships and the sense of corporate responsibility. At the same time we need, I believe, a completely fresh appraisal of the traditional use of excommunication as a means of discipline for the Church in Africa. This is a time of very rapid transition, and of widespread disintegration of the old patterns of society with their accepted sanctions. We cannot afford a moral theology which is so inflexible that it can make no provision for the needs of the bewildered mass of humanity such as is found in Africa today. Of course there must be discipline. The visible Church is a society which lives within certain frontiers, else it would be invisible. The question we are entitled to ask is whether the means for safeguarding these frontiers in Africa today are those best calculated to achieve their purpose, and at the same time to prepare for the day when the frontiers of the Church in Africa will coincide with the depths of the human nature which lives within it.

## The Power of Witchcraft

A fourth factor in the life of Africa today, which is favoring the continuation of African paganism, is the widespread and apparently increasing belief in, and practice of, witchcraft. Witchcraft, it should be understood, is not to be equated with paganism. Fundamentally it is not so much an expression of pagan religion as it is a device to deal with

certain experiences in human life for which pagan religion offers no explanation or remedy. However closely interrelated they may be in many circumstances in Africa today, we must distinguish between paganism as a religious view of life and the belief in and practice of witchcraft. Having made that distinction, it remains an important fact that witchcraft feeds upon the fears which paganism cannot exorcise and which it very easily creates.

There is comparatively little recent writing which deals seriously with the reasons why there should be a recrudescence of the practice of witchcraft such as is reported from many parts of Africa. Even when it is allowed that the belief and practice have never died out, yet it remains a fact that the phenomenon is much more widely reported today than was the case ten years ago. Indeed, the Uganda Protectorate Government in December last year submitted a bill to the Legislative Council entitled "An ordinance to make better provision for the prevention of witchcraft and the punishment of witches." This was justified on the ground that "Recent witch killings in the Protectorate have shown the necessity to review the law relating to witchcraft." The bill was passed on March 19, 1957.[2]

The most important study of witchcraft, in some respects, is the journal Africa, Vol. VIII, No. 4, October 1935. This issue contains a number of articles all devoted to this subject of witchcraft and written by competent observers. Very briefly, and of necessity inadequately, let me try to summarize what I have gleaned from this journal and other sources which I have been collecting over the last two years.

Witchcraft is in the first instance an attempt to explain why certain things happen to certain people. The question "Why?" is all-important. Unless we recognize the difference between "Why?" and "How?" we shall make the common mistake of imagining that education, and particularly scientific education, will rapidly eradicate a foolish superstition. A Pondo teacher in South Africa is recorded by Max Gluckman to have responded to instructions as to the "how" of disease with the remark, "It may be quite true that typhus is carried by lice,

but who sent the infected louse? Why did it bite one man and not another?"

The question "Why?" has always tended to take mankind beyond the realm in which the purely scientific approach is relevant. It is important to say this because, as Canon Broomfield has pointed out very forcibly in his chapter in a symposium entitled Witchcraft, a certain type of scientific education which presumes to be able to answer all the questions men ask can demolish belief in God while dismissing belief in witchcraft! In the same essay Canon Broomfield writes:

> What is the African belief which lies behind witchcraft? It is that there is a spirit world, and that it is as real as the material world. They believe that the latter is influenced by the former, and in particular that there are spirits, good, bad, and indifferent, some of whom concern themselves with the affairs of mankind. A great many of their ideas about the nature and activities of these spirits are crude, anthropomorphic, and childish, but the fundamental belief is shared with Christianity.

That is a very important statement indeed. It argues at least that we should approach the spiritual sensitivity of the African with great reverence. That very great and distinguished missionary anthropologist Edwin W. Smith summed up the study of a lifetime with these words:

> If I were asked whether there is anything in witchcraft, I should not reply with a positive "No." I am prepared to admit the charlatanism that is in it. I am sure that astute men make use of the belief to get rid of people whom they dislike--that many innocent men and women are accused, and condemned to death. I am not ready to give instances to prove to the satisfaction of cool scientists that witchcraft is a reality. But I cannot deny its possibility. I know too little of the powers of the mind, of the action of the mind upon body, to assert dogmatically that the belief in it is delusion. If telepathy, telesthesia, and telergy are actualities, witchcraft cannot be ruled out of the scheme of things. But what I think of it

> matters little. It matters a great deal that Africans believe in it. The belief lies so deeply in them that nothing short of a reconstruction of their thought-world can eradicate it.

A former District Commissioner in Northern Rhodesia, Mr. F. H. Melland, in an article on "The Ethical and Political Aspects of Witchcraft," makes this very practical assessment:

> If, as we used to do, I were to make a wax model of one of you, and stick pins into it, it would do you no harm because neither you nor I believe it could. But when a native A carves a little wooden statuette of his enemy, places a horn on top of it, and in this puts some medicine believed to be efficacious, it is most probable that the enemy B will get ill, even die. It is still more probable if B has really injured A and knows that A has sound reasons for wishing him harm. It is a matter of faith.... Doubtless a post-mortem would show nothing but natural causes, and an analysis of the medicine would be further proof that it was all bunkum, but such verdict would nevertheless be false.

Witchcraft is born of a desire for self-defence against "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." Having found in it an answer to the question "Why?" it seeks to exercise power in this spirit world either by way of disarming the enemy, for which purpose the witch doctor is called in as a diviner, or by way of damaging the enemy, an ambition which can, according to the logic of witchcraft, be achieved quite easily without resort to any third party. Where belief in witchcraft obtains, any man, and even more powerfully any woman, may be a witch. This remains true even though generally there is a technique of witchcraft, a "craft" which has to be acquired. Fundamentally this conviction is based on the belief that "if men feel immoral sentiments against others they may cause harm to these others." This is an observation about the moral basis of society which no Christian is likely to dispute. It is of some importance to note that witchcraft bears its own testimony to the moral interrelationships of men. And when there is disharmony in these interrelationships the whole community

suffers. Witchcraft is quite as much concerned with the attempt to correct this disharmony as to cause it. That is a distinction all too rarely made, and for all practical purposes completely ignored by the Colonial legislation dealing with witchcraft. The incredible anomalies which occur in this respect can be studied in the book The African Dilemma, by Frank Melland and Cullen Young. In this respect we may surmise that the African thinks that "The Law is an ass." It would be surprising if he did not express himself more strongly still.

Now it must be obvious that this world of beliefs will both influence and be influenced by the rapid changes through which African society is passing today. The occasion of bad personal relationships are vastly increased by the disintegration of the traditional tribal order and the breakdown of the old sanctions. Accusations of witchcraft, the pursuit of selfish ends at another's expense, multiply. Hence we find that at the very point where Africans are most closely involved with the new social, economic, and political order, there belief in and practice of witchcraft find a new field for their operation.

What is the Christian Church to do about this? The real answer is not to be found in witch-hunting or in denunciation of witchcraft, or in "bell, book, and candle." The real answer is to be found in the redirection of the African's wonderful capacity for faith, its transfer from Pan to Christ, from a dwelling upon the evil realities of human nature to the supernatural possibilities of the new life in Christ. We are back again at the point already made about the renewal of the Church.

"The African," says Stuart Cloete, "has an immense capacity for faith. It is his faith that kills him if he believes that he has been bewitched. It is the same faith which makes him face death as a martyr, like the Kikuyus who have died rather than take the Mau Mau oaths."

Let us remember that the Kikuyu martyrs, in their act of faith, have already made the transference from Pan to Christ.

They resisted the witchcraft of Mau Mau, as represented by the oaths, by their committed trust of themselves to the living Christ. It was a very perfect and wonderful transference made by Africans. Those who made that transference in Kenya are the promise that it can be made anywhere in Africa. Great Pan is not yet dead in Africa. But in the power of the crucified and living Lord he can be put to death in the life of any Christian in Africa or anywhere else.

But we dare not underestimate the dimensions of the unfinished task. Years ago Audrey Richards, a distinguished anthropologist, spoke of many Africans, Christians among them, as "caught between clashing moralities" and "suffering from a perpetual sense of guilt, expressing itself in a constant anxiety for some kind of supernatural defence." In a word, the choice is Pan or Christ. How much depends upon the Church being so vibrant a fellowship that men and women will choose Christ!

## Education of Women

Perhaps one of the most important points of concentration in Africa should be the education of girls. This is relevant to each of the four factors in Africa today which we have been considering. One of Stuart Cloete's incisive summaries may be quoted here:

> In the long run Africa's future is entirely dependent on the education of its women. It is the women who hold the future of the continent in their pink henna'd palms. Without a civilized hearth, a foyer as the Belgians say, there can be no civilization.

I hope that every reader will face the fact that for a long time to come Africa is going to need women teachers, graduates and others from Britain and elsewhere, ready to share in Christian education with the girls of Africa. A warning, also by Stuart Cloete, can perhaps be added to drive us to our knees: "The danger comes from those Africans who have been to Mission Schools and left them neither Christian nor educated."

Footnotes

1. Reprinted from C.M.S.News-Letter, No. 196, (London: July, 1957). By kind permission of Dr. Warren, editor of the News-Letter, we have abridged the article considerably in order to slant it more directly toward the readers of Practical Anthropology.

2. Those who would try to understand what lies behind the African convictions about witchcraft are recommended to consult the following books and journals:

Customs and Cultures in Africa, by Max Gluckman. (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1956).

Witchcraft, by J. T. Munday, E. M. Voules, G. W. Broomfield. (Central Africa House Press, 1951.)

The African Giant, by Stuart Cloete. (Collins, 1957).

African Dilemma, by Frank Melland and Cullen Young. (U.S.C.L., 1937.) Out of print.

Africa--Journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, Vol. VIII, No. 4, October, 1935.

Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. VIII, No. 2, June, 1955.

The Listener, April 26, 1956. In this issue was a valuable article by Max Warwick, entitled "The Continuance of Witchcraft Beliefs."

## CHRISTIANITY IN HUMAN CULTURES

### Meaning and Restructuring: A Cultural Process

In the last issue the problem of reinterpreting the meaning of being written in the church was discussed. Here this discussion will be continued in a bit more detail, with an attempt to state some of the aspects of this general process, which will be referred to as restructuring. Restructuring is the process whereby an individual receives some information, interprets it out of his personal and cultural background, and then responds to it in terms of its restructured meaning. This aspect of communication enters into the proclamation of the gospel and must be closely observed by missionaries who are usually attempting to communicate across widely divergent backgrounds. As is indicated here, restructuring occurs at two levels, that of the individual at any particular moment, and that of the total stock of experiences which the individual shares with other members of his group. While individual differences are important, we shall be concerned here with the restructuring which is largely determined by the cultural background. To illustrate the case, I cite here an incident which occurred as I was writing the first lines of this paragraph. Seated at a nearby table writing was my assistant, an educated Kaka tribesman. A villager known to both of us appeared suddenly at the window and said, "Are you awake?" We both returned the greeting, "Yes, are you also awake?" At this point the verbalization of the conventional greeting called for no special interpretation because there was so little information contained in it. The villager replied, "Yes, I am awake." There was a short pause, then he began again. "Your nephew fell from his bicycle and is being treated at the dispensary." At the same instant my African assistant and I reacted with two different remarks. I asked whether he was hurt badly, and my assistant merely said, "Huh," took from his pocket a small soiled notebook, and jotted down the nephew's name and the date, then launched into a diatribe with the visitor on how awful the mission is for not allowing goats to be kept on the mission property. Normally, one would ask what a wounded nephew has to do with the mission's policy of "No goats allowed." However, in the cultural categories of my

assistant's thinking a wounded nephew is equated with a payment in cash or animal to the nearest maternal uncle. Our restructuring of the information was determined by the cultural nexus of wounded nephews in each of our backgrounds. Seizing upon the occasion for further reactions,I reached into my desk drawer and broke in on the pro-goat palaver to announce to the two men that I had in my hand a letter saying that my wealthy maternal uncle had just died. The villager grinned and inquired, "How many wives did he marry?" This is an example of how we are constantly reading meanings into things out of the cultural experiences which serve to make the world meaningful to us.

Restructuring at Lolo

In the case at Lolo,[1] we saw how the act of being written in the mission was restructured to serve as a defensive mechanism against witchcraft. It was also pointed out that the first wives of polygamists were induced by their husbands to become church members. The restructuring of this situation was that wife-lending to God calls for reciprocity in some way, in this case admittance to God's eternal bliss. The possession of a mission French name was seen to be a further defensive mechanism against witchcraft.

The sacrament of communion is also restructured by the village Kaka to fit into previously made assumptions. Missionaries in the Kaka area have often remarked that the communion may strike the people as a kind of magic, and of this there is no doubt. However, this does not appear to be the real reason why the communion Sunday is the only one which is attended in force. It should be noted that the mission plays a sort of police role between Ndjambie (God) and the people. Failure to pay one's weekly pledge, to attend the services, or to keep the mission laws concerning adultery, stealing, or killing are faults for which the offender is severed from the mission and therefore from Ndjambie.

In Kaka culture, when a grave offense has been committed, one goes to his older brother who prepares food with the offended party and these two eat this food in a purification

rite which dissolves the enmity between both parties. Usually it is the eating of two chickens. The restructuring of the communion appears to be associated with this ceremonial eating which is called sataka. The mission session judges the faults of the baptized members and refuses communion to those who are believed to be guilty of some church violation. However, the missionary and catechist cannot possibly know the extent of these violations. For those who are allowed to take communion the meaning is that of sataka "removing the sin." Interestingly enough, if a church member is removed for a violation, there will often be another kin who will take communion and thereby "remove the sin" in a way analogous to the pagan sataka.

## The Missionary and Restructuring

The problem of restructured meaning is obviously many-sided and beset by numerous problems. However, considering this problem from the point of view of cultures, we may state a premise, namely, that the orientations, organizations, and values, as well as the stresses, that are inherent in a particular culture tend to provide the basis for the restructuring of new meanings in ways which are compatible with these cultural determinants. In so far as we are willing to allow for individual variation and other variables, the way in which a people will restructure meanings of new forms should be in some degree predictable. I say in some degree, because the social acceptance of a restructured meaning may be difficult to account for. The role of the innovator, the stress under which the acceptance is made, and many other factors are important in determining how a given form is going to be restructured. People living on a mission station are exposed to a wider variety of innovations and are less conservative than their village brothers whose outside contacts are very limited. Consequently, the villager's more frequent contact with sataka appears to make him more dependent upon it, and his understanding of communion in the framework of sataka is more evident.

It is a missionary's responsibility to know how and when restructuring will most likely occur. The juxtaposition of

similar ideas does not always provide a neat bridge to the differences, but more often provides a framework for reinterpreting from the one to the other. It is exceedingly discouraging to a missionary among the Kaka who preaches, teaches, and translates, only to find out that no small portion of his listeners were happily satisfied because they were lending God their wives and expecting salvation in return. By the same process, some of the Mazatec people in Mexico have reinterpreted the missionaries' message as referring to the mushroom. The missionary must constantly ask himself, "What would this mean to me if I assumed the world to be as these people assume it to be?" The missionary can only know what the people assume about the world by digging it out through painstaking effort, patience, and participation.

W.D.R.

Footnote

1. William D. Reyburn, "Motivation for Christianity: An African Conversation," Practical Anthropology, Vol. 5, No. 1, (January-February, 1958), pp. 27-32.

## PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

### "Proximity or Neighborliness?" Again

As a Christian interested in missions and with many missionary friends, I am very much interested and concerned by the editorial "Proximity or Neighborliness?" in the May-June 1957 issue of PA. It is exceedingly disquieting to me to think that missionaries of the gospel would take attitudes toward the people with whom they are working such as that of the missionary who was shocked that Africans were served coffee in cups as were the white people. My concern is not the attitudes involved, as such, but with the effect upon the Christian witness and ministry which must result.

My instinctive first reaction is that of course consecrated evangelical missionaries would not take such attitudes; the editorial surely refers to missionaries who have no really vital Christian experience or message. But could I be mistaken? If I were a missionary, might even I find myself unthinkingly involved in something like this? How does it happen? How can earnest missionaries be made aware of these situations and helped to correct them? How can new missionaries avoid becoming involved in such situations? And for me personally, how can I be sure that missions and missionaries in whom I am interested maintain effective attitudes of neighborliness with the people among whom they work?

J. Harold Greenlee

### A Problem of Individual Sensitivity

I think that the answer to your questions lies not in the Christian commitment of the missionary so much as in his personal sensitivity to other people. Occasionally there have been Westerners who were not Christian in their convictions at all who have been more "neighborly" to the people of another culture around them than is the nearby missionary. On the other hand, there have been missionaries doggedly devoted to their missionary task, and earnestly committed to Christ who have been unable to achieve a relationship greater than that

of "proximity" with the people around them. A missionary's commitment does not guarantee sensitivity.

I am sure that many a new missionary arriving on a mission field has been somewhat shocked in seeing the relationship of proximity rather than neighborliness, only to find that in a few weeks or months he is uneasily slipping into the same attitude. Eventually the uneasiness about it disappears and he in turn is ready to help the new young idealistic missionary overcome his uneasiness.

The difference is not necessarily one of an "extroverted" type of individual as against an "introverted" type, although the latter in its extremes would find it difficult to become neighborly with anyone. Rather, it seems to be more a matter of individual appreciation of other people and particularly of other cultural matters. The real "neighbors" that I have seen find deep satisfaction in being friends and neighbors to those around them. It is not something worked up for the sake of the effectiveness of their ministry.

Neither is the problem one of setting out to live in a native setting or on a native scale. Some very nonneighborly people have done that. The walls which divide person from person are intangible walls of attitude and personality more than that of buildings. However, it is much more difficult to be neighborly with people used to living in close proximity across wide lawns, high fences, and often buildings. In the typical mission compound setup it is also extremely difficult to get to know people on the intimate personal level that produces neighborliness rather than proximity.

## A Problem of Cultural Constraint

Certainly an important part of the development of the "proximity" complex among missionaries is their fear of doing things in life around them which might be understood in a way which would be detrimental to their ministry. Missionaries are often afraid to participate in native life lest they seem to give sanction to things which they disapprove. The fact that the counterdanger, the danger that by their remoteness they

make the communication of the gospel of love more difficult, does not always seem to come into consciousness here. We tend to forget that it is a greater danger to deny by our very behavior the redemptive humility of God than to run the risk of making some cultural mistake in ignorance.

Our own culture places a constraint upon us also in the wide gap which exists between the Westerner and all other peoples. In a sense the Westerner is the least equipped of all peoples to be a missionary because his culture is so highly specialized and so far remote from more typical cultures of the world. We are constrained to be individualistic, but we live as missionaries in societies which are usually highly group-conscious. We are constrained to maintain our privacy among people to whom privacy is of no moment. Or we feel constrained to be thrifty of money and property among people who may feel that any accumulation of personal belongings is miserliness. We can never be neighbors without modifying many such cultural constraints.

This does not mean that we will change culture or that we will give up all of the values of our own society. We can maintain them and still understand and recognize the values of others. One of the central difficulties involved in most missionary problems is that there is a missionary culture with its established patterns of behavior. This varies from place to place to some degree, but is remarkably uniform throughout the world. The new missionary is in no position to run counter to established missionary patterns. He goes in as a recruit, as a learner, and although he may sense that something is wrong, he is not in a position to do any differently from what his seniors do.

His training program is an enculturation program whereby he is inducted into missionary patterns of behavior. This is very necessary for the carrying on of the mission, but it means that bad patterns as well as good patterns are taught. The practical problems of health and comfort are constantly raised to him if he suggests another course, and the untried course always seems more difficult than it is. A more sensitive soul will always find his friends and learn to be

neighborly to a degree among the people around him. But so strong is this missionary pattern of proximity rather than neighborliness that many real chances for effective neighborliness are lost.

The original idealism of the new recruit turns to rationalization as he finds that his real friends, the people with whom he will spend his time of fun and fellowship, are missionaries, other foreigners, and a few educated elite in the area. The rest of the people may be relegated to the back door of the veranda, or the pressure of missionary culture may be so strong that they would never dare to come to his house at all. When he goes to theirs, he is received as a visiting VIP.

## The Problem of Selectivity in Mission Propaganda

You cannot always tell by what a mission says, or by what a missionary sermon may imply, what the actual attitude of the mission or missionary is toward these matters. The missionaries' story is presented in such a way that problems of this kind almost never emerge from the account. Some missions which talk most loudly about the "indigenous church" are the most domineering of their fellow Christians. Some which talk most loudly about living among the people and not taking Western culture to them are unconsciously the most guilty of cultural imperialism.

"Love" can be a very different thing and take very different forms with different people. To one missionary it is a sentimental idealistic experience which is divorced from the fact that he roundly scolds anyone who does not happen to do things the way he likes. To another it seems to be a saccharine sentiment which God has given him for people, so that he has been willing to go out and "sacrifice" by living on an economic scale far higher than he ever could at home.

To the real neighbor love is a matter of mature respect and understanding and consideration, of real enjoyment in another person's company, of appreciation for him and his ways so different from one's own. It is not duty but enjoyment.

I see no ways of your finding these things out but by tactful yet persistent inquiry. If you have missions in which you are interested, or a mission program which you are supporting, and if you want to know what their real relation to the people around them is, it seems that you will have to ask specific questions in specific contexts. These are not questions like "Do you believe in being neighborly?" but "How often do people drop into your house?" "What do they come for?" (obviously if they always come for something specific, like medicine or clothing, that is no criterion of neighborliness). "What kind of ordinary, down-to-earth social events do you get invited to?" "Do people count you in when there is a harvest festival or the celebration of a birth?"

Actually there is no test for neighborliness like being received as a neighbor. The way in which neighbors are received differs, of course, from culture to culture. When we behave in such a way that we are accepted, when people want us for ourselves and not for either our Western conveniences or our Christian leadership (although they may want both of these also), we can know that we are neighbors indeed.

W.A.S.

The Missionary and Human Relations

We know that it is bad for a missionary to delve into problems of politics and take sides. The pressures must be great on the foreign fields, however, as in Africa where there is such a terrific clash between the African and the Colonial Government. Seeing the two sides as the missionary does, what should his general procedure be? What should a missionary answer to a question such as this when put to him by the African: "You say you love us. You see the injustice. Now stand with us in this. Prove your concern for us." What would be the good answer? Are we to be concerned only with their "education" and "Christianizing," and let the other "chips fall

where they may," closing our eyes to the facts of the rising leaders for whom our work was partly responsible?

James Muir

I think that in general a clear-cut policy from the mission body to which all the missionaries can subscribe is best in that it presents a solid front. Too often there is genuine confusion because two missionaries on the same station disagree openly or covertly as to the national situation. In the Cameroun you will find conservative and liberal elements among the nationals as regards the independence or separation movement. There are protected interests both among Europeans and among nationals.

All that Christian missionaries may say for a century can be undone in a week in Little Rock. The salutary effect of Little Rock has been or should be to prove to missionaries that they have some basic questions to address to themselves before pitching them at Africans. The missionary is thrown on the defensive now. This should stimulate him to fresh thought and action. The missionary cannot be committed to the defense of a status quo, be it primitive tribalism or modern colonial government. However, he should be able to see the difficulties inherent in both, as well as the good which they contain.

The African wants above all other things to be treated as a self-respecting person sharing in the spiritual and material rewards of modern life. He does not demand that he become the only one entitled to first-class citizenship, but he does demand that he be included in that category. At an official level these problems become a kind of corporate kind of action which is necessary, but whatever route is chosen by the mission organization, everyone is also an individual and can exert his greatest influence for good at that level.

I have seen it too often to doubt that the individual missionary who treats the African with the respect which the African expects is making the greatest contribution in this field. If the Africans have consistently seen that the missionary regards them with the respect which they look for, they are not very apt to ask that we now "prove our concern

for them," for they will already possess an orientation toward the missionary that he is naturally concerned.

When it is all said and done, the missionary's greatest role is that of a brother, not that of a paternal father. There are many practices in African cultures which may be as unacceptable to the missionary as practices of the colonial government. However, the African is not, I believe, nearly as concerned for these as he is for the fact that Christianity too often calls men into a brotherhood and then denies its very message by the separating mechanisms introduced through the side of the missionaries' culture. I am speaking of African Christians here and not of Africans in general. In short, I do not think the problem for the missionary is what reply he is going to have ready to give the African. This is putting the proposition in reverse. The missionary's consistency between what he preaches and what he practices will provide the African with the answer to his problems relating to missionaries.

W.D.R.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Flatland, by Edwin A. Abbott. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. Paper bound, $1.00.[1]

Reviewed by Ellen Ross

This book is an intriguing fantasy of life in a two-dimensional world. Although written before the turn of the century, it is still, as stated on the cover, "...a first-rate introduction to the concepts of relativity and multiple dimensions of space." It is, however, much more than that, for it also presents in a new and original light the old-as-Babel problem of cross-cultural communication. Anyone concerned with this knotty question--and what missionary is not?--will find its treatment in Flatland both provocative and profitable.

The book is divided into two parts, the first entitled "This World" and the second "Other Worlds." In the former is given a succinct description of the out-of-our-world society of Flatland, set in the framework of a two-dimensional reality. The series of intellectual and emotional contortions required in order to understand the problems, values, and customs of Flatland is exactly the sort of exercise needed to keep the would-be student of other cultures in good trim. However, the cultural study of "This World" is only a preliminary to the presentation of the real problem of the book--that of communication with "Other Worlds." How can the truth of a "higher world" be meaningfully conveyed to inhabitants of a "lower world"? How orient creatures of a "cabin'd, cribbed, confined" sort of space to the new directions and the wider horizons of Space with another dimension? The relevance of such a theme to the bearer of the Christian message in and to any culture is obvious.

Flatland is ostensibly written by a Square, native to a country of only two dimensions, where all material objects are flat geometric figures. These figures have only length and breadth, but no recognizable height, the latter being a non-existent concept in this world. Nothing is "solid" in Flatland, and nothing is visible in any form other than that of a

straight line, for viewer and viewed are always on the same plane. (Imagine looking at a round coin lying on a table: viewed from above its roundness is perfectly apparent, but if the eye is lowered to the very edge of the table, the coin will then appear only as a line.) In Flatland, since there is neither "up" nor "down," all motion is horizontal--akin to what we think of as sliding. The only directions known are North, South, East, and West. Rain "falls" from the North, and standing "up" or sitting "down" are not physical movements but mental changes of attitude. Since no Flatlander can ever see the surface of a figure, that hidden part is called the "inside." An object resting on the surface of a flat cupboard is securely "inside" and protected."

Although all Flatlanders exist on the same physical plane, their social structure shows the presence of clear-cut concepts of superiority and inferiority. In this country it is not clothes but "Configuration" which makes the man. All priestly doctrine centers round the maxim "Attend to your Configuration," and equality of an individual's sides is a prime requisite to social recognition and success. Women, having no sides at all (being mere Straight Lines) are of little account. So are the soldiers and the working class, for they are only Isosceles Triangles, and "can hardly be said to deserve the name of human figures, since they have not all their sides equal." The middle class is composed of Equilateral Triangles and the professional class of Squares and Pentagons. Hexagons and other polygons form the nobility, while the priestly governing order is composed of polygons so multisided that they are given the courtesy title of Circles.

It is in the second half that Flatland really becomes fascinating, for here begin the problems of transdimensional communication. In a dream one night, the Square visits Lineland, the land of one dimension. He sees before him a single long Line, on which many smaller lines are moving to and fro. After vainly trying to attract the attention of the largest of these moving lines, the Square finally enters the long Line (which is the entire world of Lineland) and thus "materializes" before the eyes of the Linelander. The latter turns out to be the monarch of this linear world. There ensues a conversation

full of tragi-comic misunderstandings because of the difference in the background of the participants. Still, the Square manages to learn a good deal about Lineland.

In this land of one dimension, all the inhabitants are Lines--some longer, some shorter. Figures have only length--"breadth" and "height" both being nonexistent concepts. Nothing has "area" in Lineland, and nothing is visible in any form other than that of a point. Although Linelanders have an eye at each end of their linear bodies, with these eyes they can see only the terminal points of their flanking neighbors. Not only is there no "up" or "down" in this country--there is no "sideways." North and South along the world Line are the only directions known. To move in another direction is unthinkable. On their one-lane Lifeline, no Linelander can pass his neighbor, so neighbors remain such till death (or birth) do them part. Marriages are consummated through vocal harmony. Since none can see his own or his neighbor's "side," this is the part called "inside" in Lineland--the hidden and invisible.

After discussing with his host the life and customs of Lineland, the square makes a zealous but misguided attempt to enlighten him as to the "true" nature of things. "Your Space," he smugly explains, "is not the true Space. True Space is a Plane; but your Space is only a Line." He goes on to mention motion from "left to right," which the Linelander identifies with the only set of directions which he knows--North and South. The Square upbraids him for his ignorance of so simple a distinction, and proceeds to more "explanations" which merely convince the Linelander that he is quite mad. Mutual recriminations pile up, with accusations, on the one hand of perverseness and ignorance, on the other of irrationality and audacity, and baffled Lineland Monarch resorts to violence in an attempt to silence the intruder, and the Square narrowly escapes homeward with his life.

The next night it is the turn of the Square to receive a visitor from another world--a Sphere from Spaceland, the land of three dimensions. The tables are now turned, for this time it is the Square who plays the role of the ignorant "native" being instructed by a superior being. His solid visitor

attempts in vain to enlighten him regarding the nature of "True Space"--a Space with a third dimension called "height," and with a set of directions called "upward" and "downward." This is an idea which the Square simply cannot comprehend. He fares no better with the Sphere's statement that in the Land of Three Dimensions beings can look down on Flatland and see the "insides" of all its objects. His incredulity quickly turns into anger and the conversation becomes so heated that in exasperation and self-defense the Sphere returns to Spaceland, taking with him his intractable pupil.

In Spaceland, the Square sees for himself the truth of all the Sphere has been trying to tell him. He actually sees with his own eyes the solid Sphere (who in Flatland had appeared to him merely as a Circle, visible only as a Line), and other "Marvelous Beings," like Cubes. From this higher world he can look down on his own land and "see the insides" of Flatland figures. He is completely converted to the "Gospel of the Third Dimension." And now the pupil becomes the teacher. The converted Square suggests to the Sphere the possibility of the existence of still a higher world, with yet another dimension, from whence the "insides" of even Spaceland figures may be visible. It is now the Sphere's turn to become confused, irritated, angry, for he simply cannot conceive of such a thing, although he does reluctantly admit that strange tales have sometimes been told about beings of a still higher world. However, he dismisses such tales as nonsense, and is so upset by the persistence of his erstwhile pupil that at last he summarily dispatches him back to Flatland.

Back in his own land, the now enlightened Square becomes an Apostle of the Gospel of the Third Dimension. He burns with zeal to share his new-found knowledge. But, instead of gratefully accepting this illumination, his fellow Flatlanders hale him before the Circle Council to be tried for "mad heresy." Found clearly guilty, he is sentenced to life imprisonment. His only means of communication with the outside world is through the writing of his memoirs, which he has just concluded in the form of Flatland. He hopes by this method to bring his fellow Flatlanders to understand and accept the great truth of the Third Dimension.

A reading of this book can hardly fail to conjure up before the Christian a vividly fresh realization of the yawning chasm that lies between the world of flesh and the world of spirit, the utter futility of attempts to persuade Reason to transcend its own built-in barriers, and the absolute necessity for the leap of Faith--for "supernaturalization"--before the natural man can understand "the things which be of God." Secondarily, but still important, Flatland can scarcely help being a hard-to-forget lesson to all of us in the humility born of an acceptance of relativity. All in all, it is well worth reading--and owning.

Footnote

1. Available from Practical Anthropology.

The Ways of Mankind: Anthropology on L.P. Urbana, Illinois: National Association of Educational Broadcasters. $25.00 per album.

Reviewed by James O. Buswell, III

Two fascinating albums consisting of twenty-six 29-minute programs of dramatized anthropological fare are available through the National Association of Educational Broadcasters.[1]

Each album consists of seven records. Series I introduces the listener to fundamental anthropological subjects such as "culture," "language," "technology," "religion." Series II contains six programs on "Law and Justice," highlighting legal procedures of various peoples, a series of four programs on the life of the Yurok Indians, and three programs on Bali.

All of the programs contain a cross-cultural approach with narrator-lecturer combined with a skillfully dramatized story illustrating each subject. All are so rich with important

teaching, dramatic excitement, and humor that it is hard to single out those which are "best." Nevertheless, it can be said that two of these programs are particularly noteworthy: Program 1 of Series I, "A Word in Your Ear: A Study in Language," is tremendously instructive in presenting a conception of the functions of human speech in relation to culture in time and space which would be impossible outside of a cross-cultural framework. Also, "The Reluctant Shaman" (Yurok), program 8 of Series II, is particularly outstanding in communicating the personal and cultural values, their initial opposition and subsequent change, in the call, training, and practice of a native girl who becomes a tribal doctor or shaman.

The rest of the programs are as follows: 2. "Stand-in for a Murdurer: A Study in Culture" (Tlingit); 3. "Desert Soliloquy: A Study in Education" (Hopi); 4. "When Greek Meets Greek: A Study in Values" (Athens and Sparta); 5. "The Sea Lion Flippers: A Study in Ethics" (Yurok); 6. "Sticks and Stones: A Study in Groups" (Sociology); 9. "All the World's a Stage: A Study in Status and Role" (Cross-cultural); 10. "Home Sweet Home: A Study in Family" (Chinese); 11. "Survival: A Study in Technology" (Eskimo); 12. "I Know What I Like: A Study in Art" and 13. "Museum of Man: A Study in Society" (Summary).

Series II. Subseries on Law and Justice: 1. "The Case of the Borrowed Wife" (Eskimo); 2. "The Case of the Bamboo-sized Pigs" (Ifugao); 3. "The Repentent Horse Thief" (Cheyenne); 4. "Lion Bites Man" (Ba Ila); 5. "The Forbidden Name of Wednesday (Ashanti); 6. "Laying Down the Law" (Summary).

Subseries on Yurok: 7. "Life of a Yurok"; 8. "The Reluctant Shaman"; 9. "The Sea-Monster and the Bride"; 10. "World Renewal."

Subseries on Bali: 11. "The Isle is Full of Voices"; 12. "The Coming Out"; 13. "The Fighting Cock Refrain."

Expert consultants were used in the preparation of these valuable programs, all under the direction of Dr. Walter Goldschmidt, of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of California. The special consultants were Dr. E. A.

Hoebel for the subseries on Law; Dr. Alfred L. Kroeber for the subseries on Yurok; and Colin McPhee, Claire Holt, and Dr. Margaret Mead for the subseries on Bali.

These programs are exceedingly useful, not only in the classroom, but for adult discussion groups as well. They have also been used with great value in missionary orientation programs. The 5 records on the Yurok, for example, give an excellent and rather comprehensive understanding of this tribe's values, personalities, and culture, and may be used to stimulate fruitful discussion on just how the gospel should be introduced into the context of such institutions.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Systematic Study of a Culture

The best thing I have come upon yet in language and culture study is as follows. Every day I study the culture of the people in a systematic manner. I have used Murdock's An Outline of Culture Materials to help me, and I have set up a file with every heading I could think of. Each day I investigate a different subject (or else continue on one subject until its conclusion). I write everything out in Vietnamese and thereby discover invaluable knowledge concerning their culture and also words which are very vital to their thinking. This has made language study an adventure, and I am gaining an understanding of this culture and people that some missionaries who have been here for forty years have never bothered to look into. Just being with the people and picking things up offhand is not enough. Some of these things must be searched after. We are so ignorant of their ways--and they know it--that when we pull cultural boobs they just overlook them and recognize that we just do not understand. There are subtile taboos in this culture that I am sure some older missionaries are not aware of, or else they choose to brush them aside in the face of the "superior American way." May the Lord help me that in all the little things of life out here I may not only please Him but also never give cause of offense to those to whom He has sent me.

Robert Henry
Tourane, Vietnam

### Medicine or Anthropology?

I discovered your magazine, Practical Anthropology, for the first time this evening while browsing in the library. Your magazine is precisely what I am looking for. I am a premedical student planning on foreign work as a "missionary." For some time I have been wondering if God wants me to be a professional anthropologist instead of a doctor. I realize